

ANDREW ALLEN'S ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH NEIL HANSEN AND SISTER ROBIN HANSEN ON WEDNESDAY 1 MARCH 2023

AA I will start with both of your birth dates and where you were born.

NH I was born in Camden on 20 July 1950.

AA There was no hospital in Campbelltown then was there.

NH Not at that stage no. They all used to go to Camden for baby deliveries.

AA Robin

RH I was born in Crown Street Women's Hospital 17 August 1949. Mum had lost a baby previously I think that's why she gave birth in Sydney.

AA Was it a boy or a girl?

RH It was a boy.

NH It was stillborn.

RH I think about 12 months before I was born.

NH In 1948

RH It was never ever talked about.

NH The baby itself is buried in the general cemetery at Camden. I think it's the Presbyterian part.

AA Are there other brothers and sisters?

NH No just us two

AA What were your parent's names?

NH Dad's name was Percy Lawrence Hansen and mum's name was there was a story about that too. She was Molly Mason but she was christened Mary Ellen Mason. She was born in Islington in England in 1915. She was born when her so called father was away in the army at the First World War. When he came back from the war he took my mum as his daughter. Even though he is on the birth certificate as her father, he couldn't have been because of the difference when she was conceived.

RH He was already away.

NH He said she was his own daughter but then when he actually - mum's mum my grandmother passed away in 1919 and when he married again or was dating this other lady later to marry, she said she's not your daughter, if you don't put her in a workhouse I'm leaving you.

RH She was put into Barnardo's. So she came out here as a Barnardo's child.

NH In 1929 when she was 15.

AA How did she feel about it?

5 mins

RH Mum never spoke about it.

NH Mum tried for years, she wouldn't talk about being a Barnardo's child. We knew my aunts and that knew but she tried for years to get her birth certificate from Barnardo's. We've got a big folder from Barnardo's all her work.

RH After she died, they sent all this.

NH After she died they ended up sending her file out and it had this birth certificate in there. But she also had three half-sisters. There was Florence, Stella and Dorothy and I'm trying to research through My Heritage that part of my family, I've got my father's back to 1750 and I'm doing my grandmother's which I've got about 3,000 back in Norway. It's hard to find out about the English side of my mother's family. I'm finding different things out you know.

AA So you have lots of relatives over there.

RH We do, we have here a lot of them have come here.

NH Like Robin and I and my two daughters and Robin's son, that's about the only immediate family we have here at the moment. We have a couple of second cousins and third cousins but we don't really see them.

RH They live in Brooklyn

NH I keep in touch with a second cousin who is in Forest Hills near Wagga Wagga.

AA What sort of childhood did you have? Did you have a good childhood?

RH It was great here. Both my parents never drove, never had a car. Dad was 49 when I was born so he was an old father. Mum was probably 32. He used to ride a pushbike to work. We just had to go on buses but we sort of didn't know any different only when we became teenagers. That's when you realise you couldn't get out with your friends.

NH But we had cousins down in Merrylands who used to always come up and see my aunt and my mother as well. They would take us in their vehicle to the Campbelltown shows.

RH I remember they took us to the building of the Opera House.

NH They were pretty good.

RH He was a Barnes, the Barnes from Kentlyn.

AA Where the stone house is.

RH Yes that's right, our cousin Ailsa married Trevor Barnes so that is the connection there. He would always have another car, he loved driving so we got taken around a lot.

AA So you wouldn't have had any trips away then.

NH We used to go up to Brooklyn.

RH We never went away on holidays. We would go up to Brooklyn on the train or the cousins would drive us to Brooklyn but we never went away as a family.

NH No we never went away, no.

AA It's funny that both of them didn't drive isn't it.

RH Mum made sure that I learnt to drive. She paid for lessons, she said you've got to learn to drive, there was no way she could have but she made sure that I learnt to drive.

NH Early in my childhood probably 12 and 13 we got old cars and I had mates from Campbelltown who would ride their bikes out and had a couple of old cars. I learnt to drive pretty early.

RH Morris Minors

10 mins

AA Kids back then on farms learnt to drive.

RH Dad had nothing he didn't know about cars did he?

NH No, dad worked on the Department of Main Roads for years. In his early days he was a rigger's assistant and he worked on Bunnerong Power House. He fell from a fair height and broke both his legs. I think he might have been only in his 30s then or maybe early 40s.

RH It was a long time before we were born.

NH He had bad knees after that. We had our bikes.

RH We had neighbours too by then and we had kids to play with.

AA Kids back then from what I have heard walked a lot too.

NH Kids tended to make their own fun. Billy carts and stuff like that you know. There was no staying inside winter and summer really unless it was pouring rain.

AA You never got bored did you? I was brought up on a farm and I never got bored.

RH When it got towards teenage years that's when it started.

NH I remember we never had...

RH We didn't have TV until I was 16.

NH Yeah I was 15 when he got TV.

RH I was left school by then.

NH Your friends had TV but we sort of never worried. It never worried me. I was always happy and on the move and that.

AA What about school, where was primary school for you?

RH We went to Campbelltown Central. Campbelltown North opened in 1959 and everyone this side of Warby Street had to go to Campbelltown North. So I was in 4th class, we were the first 4th, 5th and 6th class. Then we went to Campbelltown High.

AA So you didn't go to Minto

RH No, the reason was I think there was a bus at 8am and mum didn't want us to be down there for an hour that was the rationalisation.

NH Something like that yeah. It wasn't a strict criteria that you had to go to.

RH So we missed out on all the Minto connections.

AA Yes you would have. I just assumed that you went to Minto School.

RH I met a few people from Minto when I used to catch the train to work. I would see them down at Minto Station of an afternoon.

NH Plus we saw a few when we went to high school too. A lot of them went to Campbelltown High and not to Ingleburn.

AA How did you get on with the teachers at school?

NH I was pretty much meek and mild actually. I just went with the flow. I got on well with the teachers yeah.

RH I was pretty shy and didn't say anything. I didn't used to like the sewing teacher, she was really authoritarian. She was the Headmaster's wife Mrs Leech. Mr Leech was the Headmaster. It turned out we had a neighbour and she was a teacher and she used to know him. So that's how we were introduced. They used to teach together as teachers used to move around. So Miss Asmith she was a teacher at Ingleburn High School and she lived just up the road here and she knew Cec Leech. He was strict. Mr Barron was really nice, he was a nice teacher.

15 mins

AA Do you remember East Minto School and was it burnt down before ...

NH It burnt down in 1949 under suspicious circumstances. My Aunt Alexandra she always said there was an intoxicated – I think they knew who it was.

RH Who was it?

NH I don't know, I don't know where it started, I think it had a veranda. I think he used to go and sleep there. I think he must have started according to my aunt, he started a fire. I don't whether he was drunk and wanted a fire to keep himself warm.

RH You know where it was up there.

AA I was going to ask, I think I know but I was just going to confirm where it was.

NH If you go up here, Hereford, well the house on the corner this side.

RH The really big new house.

NH Well that's where the school was.

AA I didn't know that, I just assumed you know that there was no suspicion. It's interesting.

NH I don't know if that was only folk lore or not, that's what she said.

RH Then the kids had to go to Minto up on Campbelltown Road, the school was up there, before the main Minto School was built.

NH Apparently, I remember years and years ago exploring around the area and that and I think dad and aunty told me too they had trenches in the school in case of World War One. The school must have started in the late 1800s or early 1900s.

AA It was there for a fair while. So your grandparents were here too were they?

NH Yes, my father's parents were here. As I have stated my mother never knew her parents. Jasper Hansen was born in 1838 on island down below Sweden I think it was to the right of Denmark called Borgholm. He was born there in 1838 and he went to sea when he was 21 in the merchant navy and travelled to America and that on various ships. He came out here I think in 1859 and was naturalised in New South Wales. Johanna that was her second husband, she also was married to a chap named Charles Clauson. I haven't got any notes prepared I should have.

20 mins

He came out here in the 1860s or 70s I think and he was a gold prospector. He even did the Sullivan Goldfields in New Zealand and all around New South Wales and Queensland. He was out here for quite some time and then he went back to Denmark, he was a Dane, and he married Johanna in Denmark and brought her out in 1892. He passed away in 1898 I think. I think he was only around 50.

RH They were neighbours, Hansen and Clauson.

NH Yes, Clauson and Johanna lived where the old house is now. I don't know how much of it was built but apparently when Clauson passed away Jasper Hansen being a neighbour, he lived off Westmoreland Road. They never had any children and she couldn't speak really good English and she ended up with Jasper and married him. They had five children. He was quite a bit older than Johanna.

RH Like dad and mum.

AA He could speak pretty good English Jasper, could he?

NH Yes, he had Hansens Road named after him. He was an Alderman at that stage in the area there was only Ingleburn Council and he was an Alderman at Ingleburn.

RH 1923 I think it was.

NH I researched I've got him moving a motion I think it was early 1920s. Campbelltown Council started off and they amalgamated or something like that.

AA Yes they did later on. The house in Westmoreland Road is that still standing?

NH Even when I was young the house was never there.

RH I think it must be where John Rider Reserve is.

NH I remember two gates there.

RH It must have been moved you used to come directly straight up to the house on the corner.

NH Off Hansens Road

RH You know where the bend is?

AA Yes I think I know where you mean.

RH Westmoreland Road instead of going around it used to go straight up.

NH Which is only probably I think maybe 200 yards or something like that. But it was just there on the bend.

RH Oh was it

NH I remember the gate posts. They told me that was where – There's nothing there now. We should have got the gate posts. As far as I know there were no photos of it either.

AA That's a shame that there's no photos. So Hansen's Cottage we were talking a little about that before. So when was that demolished, the circumstances of its demolition.

25 mins

NH My aunt stayed in the house, there was a house built in the 70s in front of the original house and my aunt and uncle moved into it probably would have been the 70s and my uncle passed away in 1988. They were brother and sister, they never married and they lived on the farm. My Uncle Andrius passed away in 1988, sorry mum did, it was 1980 he passed away.

RH The house was just left vacant.

NH My Aunt Alexandra lived in it until 1998 when she broke her hip and she went into Kilbride. She was 96 when she went into Kilbride and she passed away in Kilbride when she was 98. The house was sort of left.

NH Our cousin Ross was the Executor and he paid the bills. Actually his father was, but he passed away while the aunt was still alive and he took over and used to pay the bills and that.

RH It was never rented out just stayed vacant.

NH It was vacant 2 or 3 years probably until 2001 or 2002. I used to mow around the new house and I would splash around the back. I used to go up every day and open the blinds in the new house.

RH Did you?

NH The new house, the ones in the front yeah. When you go into aged care, if you've got a property it's got to be sold you just can't hang on to it. Eventually it was sold and it being on the register, the house was riddled with white ants because it was weatherboard and we were always told that it was going to be demolished. But they took all photos of the inside of the house and I think the Council's got that. It would be on record there.

AA We've got some photographs of the house.

NH A lady friend took up a petition with a few names in the area to have it saved but they said it really was too far gone and really we would have had to put money into it. You just couldn't do it you know. But they said it's going to be demolished but we would be notified when it would be demolished. But as it happens one Sunday I heard a machine working and I went up to the front of my house to have a look and a big excavator was knocking it to the ground. We never got notified about that. A lot of people were pretty upset about it.

AA I believe so. It was a Sunday morning was it?

NH It was a Sunday morning.

AA You would have had a connection to it.

NH Dad and my uncle they worked the land with horses up until about – well dad passed away in 1974 – up until about 1971 they were still working, or dad was.

30 mins

RH Dad worked on the DMR but on weekends he would be up there ploughing.

NH We used to go out with a cross cut saw my dad and uncle and we had a place where they could cut ironbark timber to make the fences and that.

RH That was Etchell's property it would be on your list.

NH Dad was good friends with the Etchells, Oke Etchell and Oke's father was Harry I think. Harry's brother lived over in Eckersley and he packed up and went to World War One and he got killed at Ypres. He was apparently sitting in a trench near Ypres and a bomb landed near him and blew both legs off and by the time they got him back to a field station which was about 200 yards away he died. He is buried at a cemetery near Hoog Crater Cemetery at Ypres.

AA I've had a bit to do with Bob Etchells and he has told me a bit about the family. I had a look at the cottage which has been demolished now.

NH Did Bob want it demolished?

AA I think he might have. It's a shame.

RH Has it been demolished?

AA Yes, it has been demolished. I've got photos before it was knocked down.

NH According to dad, on the inside it was wallpapered with all like newspapers and papers that he had kept a written record of things that were done and stuff he had bought. I never saw it myself.

RH We'd been in there years and years ago.

AA Where did you live when you were children then?

RH Over at the corner house which is two houses over.

NH We rented there. I think you were about seven and I was about six when we came to live here.

RH I started school at six and I can remember catching the bus from here.

NH While dad and mum and we were renting over at the corner house there it was only a shack but it was nice, it was fairly well built wasn't it? I can't really remember it but from what they say, there was an old house up near Eagleview Road there somewhere up where Hillcrest House is on Eagleview Road.

RH It's in between Hillcrest and Ben Lomond Road there was another house and that's where some of the bricks came from.

NH Dad and my uncle brought the bricks over in a horse drawn dray to here and they cleaned them to build this house, that's double brick there.

35 mins

RH It's been cement rendered which is a shame.

AA There's a few old houses along Hansens Road or there was. Kia Ora where J C Rider lived.

NH Apparently if that bypass ever goes through from Bensley Road up to the back of old Hansens that's supposed to go across Hansens Road there according to what a chap told me.

RH That's why it's not lived in now. Evidently he did all this beautiful glass work.

AA Glass engraving yeah that's right.

RH That's why John Rider Reserve is named after this man.

AA He was a very talented glass engraver.

- RH** He had a workshop in Sydney. We knew someone who lived there, the Angus's. My aunty was very social and we would often go visiting people. We called her Aunty Ann not Alexandra she was always Aunty Ann, she was really social she was always having people come for afternoon tea and we would visit neighbours. That's how we got to know so many people, that was a thing we would do on Sundays. Not religiously, we never had the phone on, people like oh there's the McKay's coming. The McKay's from Merrylands would come for afternoon tea. There was always scones and stuff and they brought food too. There was always visitors.
- AA** You used to have them like that. You never had to ring up and tell people you were coming.
- RH** We never had a phone. My aunt was a lot more social than my mum. Mum was a bit shy.
- NH** My aunt got the phone on first because the paddock at the right up the front used to be a nursery. She leased it to a chap that had a nursery there and he got the phone on.
- RH** Which was probably good, because she probably would never have wanted the phone on.
- NH** We could go up there and ring up and stuff like that.
- AA** I was reading about Jasper and his family and how they would go to Freres Crossing every Boxing Day.
- RH** We have got photos of different groups with the old woollen swimming costumes with the men with the like singlet tops.
- NH** All in one.
- RH** They must have gone through the bush. There used to be a laneway down the bottom. We used to walk out when we were kids, we would walk out with mum and aunty to Barnes's on a Sunday. It was probably a fire trail but very rugged.
- NH** It was well worn. It was like a walking track.
- RH** We would come out on Coral Avenue, the road near Frere's Crossing.
- AA** It's still a fair walk isn't it?
- RH** We never took water. We had no idea of water, we didn't have plastic water bottles. It's just the way it was. The Barnes's were very social, they always had friends coming in the summer so we would often get a lift home. I suppose if we didn't we would have walked home.
- NH** Our mother used to love bush walking and nature.
- RH** She would finish her work and go down the bush. When we went to school she would go down the bush and take the dog.
- AA** Did you have a place where you went swimming?

RH We would swim down in the creek but it wasn't very deep.

NH Peter Meadows Creek is down the back but if you had a lot of rain it was very wide and very quick but in those days the summers were very severe and it was amazing how quick it would dry up. We used to swim mostly at Frere's Crossing or The Basin.

40 mins

AA Do you remember were there many interesting characters, interesting people when you were kids that sort of fascinated you around Minto or even Campbelltown around the area?

NH There used to be a chap opposite the Hansen cottage on this side of the road his name was Jimmy Oldham. He used to make walking sticks, he was a bit of a character.

RH I think he was war damaged.

NH There used to be a Mr Boyes out the back.

RH He would catch the bus sometimes. We would go on the bus to Minto and mum used to go to Merrylands every second Friday with my aunt to visit my cousin and she would come back with this huge half a sheep of meat in bags. We would stay on the bus from school and go past and down to Minto and meet them from the train. Often there would be Mr Goodwin and Mr Boyes, they were old war men too, and they would have been war damaged.

NH They were TPIs. A lot of them went through the First World War and the Second World War.

RH The house on the corner where Westmoreland used to come out, that was the Moore's property. He was an old alcoholic too wasn't he?

NH Yeah, but he was no threat to anyone really. He might have been to his family. Other than that no I think like everyone – dad was a bit of a loner wasn't he.

RH Yeah like you. He didn't have a lot of people visiting here. He had a friend when he was in the DMR Martin Thone he was a union man and dad and he

NH He was a dog catcher for many years after he left the DMR. He was of Dutch descent, he was my dad's best mate on the DMR and they tried to introduce people in the DMR to the union and that because they got conditions for the men. If they were out working where it was pretty isolated they could get like a toilet for the day and stuff like that you know.

RH They were all in open backed trucks with a canopy.

NH Dad and Martin Thone were very good friends.

RH We had a friend the Longhursts. They would be on your list of old locals.

AA There's always a Longhurst around. I have interviewed Coral Henson who was a Longhurst.

RH They lived where Leicester Street used to come down to Pembroke Road. There was a Margaret and Bruce Longhurst lived there. Mum and aunty were very good friends with them.

AA You remember Keith Longhurst I guess.

RH Keith Longhurst yeah

AA You mentioned that your mum went to Merrylands every fortnight. Did she do her shopping in Minto?

RH No she went to Campbelltown to do her shopping. There must have been a good butcher in Merrylands. Both mum and aunt would come back with bags, do you remember that Neil? We didn't have a freezer, we had a freezer in the fridge but it must have been a lot of meat. The dogs got shanks, where now they're a prime cut, the dogs were eating shanks. It was a social day for them. In the holidays we would go with them on that day into Merrylands. Bus to Minto and then the train.

45 mins

AA It's funny that she brought back sheep parts.

RH Yeah, half a sheep it would have been between them. The butcher would cut it. But she did the shopping in Campbelltown not in Minto. There was nothing in Minto then. The main shopping she caught a bus to Campbelltown. She used to go to Coles Supermarket.

AA Minto buildings, Minto was only a small village I guess.

RH There was the corner shop which is still there and newsagent which is still there.

NH I remember the stationhouse just opposite on this side which was opposite a shop on the other side.

AA The stationmaster's house you're talking about.

RH We wouldn't go to Minto, logistically it just wasn't right for the bus.

NH Unless we rode our bikes.

RH The hills coming back up Ben Lomond Road was a killer.

NH It might have been 15 foot higher at the top because they knocked a heap off it when they put the Housing Commission homes in. Back in the early days it was a lot steeper. It's still steep now, it was a lot steeper.

AA Where was the Arcadia, I came across it the other day I think it was a church.

RH I know I think that was the Congregational Church.

AA I think it was.

RH That would have been off Ben Lomond Road, off Westmoreland Road. That's where I used to go to Sunday School.

AA Oh that's where it was off Westmoreland Road.

RH It might have been near Guernsey or Eagleview Road. I imagine it would have been somewhere where the Muslim place is where the school is. That's where the Barnes lived at one time too in a cottage there.

AA Jasper was Congregational. He is buried in the cemetery.

NH I only just found out probably about the end of last year probably November that Johanna's first husband Clauson was buried there. I did research and there was a Charles because he was known as Charles Clauson. I researched it on line through the New South Wales Government and a Charles Clauson passed away in Emmaville. Anyway I got his details, his death certificate and he passed away he was only about six months. I always thought it was him. I started researching with David and I can't think of the other chap's name now, Greg and they found out – I looked on line – but Clauson wasn't in the deaths but then again his name came up it wasn't Clauson but it was spelt different. They found out yes he is buried there. That's when Greg was going to get me a layout of the cemetery blocks and that.

50 mins

AA You've got Jasper's headstone haven't you.

NH Yes it's broken into about a hundred bits. I still might get a new one done.

RH What can you do with the old one?

NH I can put it on a bit of board and glue it on a bit of board. It's only got Jasper's headstone obituary.

RH It doesn't mention his wife Johanna.

NH Johanna is buried in the same grave. The headstone was never updated.

RH They're both under the one sign.

AA You still know where they are.

I've enjoyed having a chat to you.

NH We've probably gone on a bit too much.

AA No, no it was good and I look forward to having a look at the photos that you have got too. That would be great. Thank you very much for your time.

RH It was enjoyable.

NH I'm not real good at talking.

RH Once you get going if the subject is right.

AA You did a good job, thank you.